

2022 WNBA Commissioner's Cup

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

Chicago Sky James Wade

Pregame

JAMES WADE: Welcome to Chicago. I hope this energy fills you up, like Chicago city would. We've got GOATs in the building.

I'm ready for all questions.

Q. James, your team hasn't lost back to back; what do you attribute this team's ability to adjust game by game to?

JAMES WADE: I attribute it to a lot of things: Veteran leadership, I think we're a detail-oriented team. We try to learn from -- we try to have the lessons from the losses that we have and try and apply them right away, so they're very mature in doing that.

When it comes to playing together, they take pride in it. We try not to make the same mistakes twice.

Q. Coach, is Courtney going to be on a minutes restriction heading into this game, given that it's an exhibition, or is she ready to go outside of that?

JAMES WADE: It's an exhibition?

Q. I mean, in a sense it is, isn't it? Maybe that's a false -- it does not count against the regular-season schedule.

JAMES WADE: I don't know if it counts as an exhibition if it doesn't count as a regular-season game. It's a title game. We're going to -- I would love to get paid an amount of money to coach exhibition games or play in exhibition games or win exhibition games. She's not on a minutes restriction. We take pride in this game, so yeah. Not an exhibition.

Q. I apologize for the characterization. What is your mindset going into this game? Do you view this as a litmus test, given that this is the second best team in the standings?



JAMES WADE: Well, I think every game is a test, but it's about us at this point. They're a formidable opponent. They're a great team. We don't take it lightly.

This is a way to kind of measure ourselves and see where we are at this point in the season, and especially when the stakes matter. We're going to lean on the experience that we have, but right now it's just about us executing what we need to do, and yeah, it's I guess -- you said what test?

Q. Litmus test.

JAMES WADE: Yeah, whatever that is. But I think it's a good that.

Q. Building on that a little bit, this is an interesting game. It's against another top team. Is this potentially a good energy builder or a springboard for your team down the stretch? You're in, but to really get you guys firing on all cylinders as you head toward the Playoffs?

JAMES WADE: I mean, we don't take anything for granted, so we're going to take whatever we can from the game and try to learn from it.

We're going to put pressure on ourselves to kind of compete and execute the way we want to execute, and we know that we have them to face, but like I said before, it's about us, and we're going to use this to judge what we are and kind of learn how we can keep going. We just want to win this game.

It's about how we win at this point. We can win and still have things to improve on. We're one month from Playoffs, so we just want to continue to grow.

I would love to, after this game, say that we're not the team that we're going to be in a month, even if we win the game, or when we win the game. That's how I feel. We'll use this game to just kind of judge where we are and see where we need to improve and apply it to two days from now when we have to play against New York here.

Q. The charitable component of this game and that wrinkle that the league has put into it this year, do you



feel any extra -- does that give your players any extra motivation or does it give them and has it created kind of a different feel towards the game?

JAMES WADE: For sure. You know, we chose the charity that we wanted to play for, and we have a special connection with this city, especially the inner city. I think it means a lot to our players individually and as a whole that we are able to give back in this kind of situation where you win a game and directly apply it to charitable causes.

The WNBA has been at the forefront of this for a long time, and our team has, as well, and I've told stories of when I got the job, the things the ownership invited me to and stuff that we did and stuff that he continues to do to this day. Our team has always been about that.

Very special cause, and we're very motivated to play for that. So I think it's only good vibes all around when it comes to those things.

Q. I'm curious now that we're in year two of the Commissioner's Cup what your thoughts are having this in-season tournament as a whole, now that you're in the championship game? Do you like the format? Do you like the setup? Do you think there's ways the W could continue to switch it up and experiment with new things moving forward?

JAMES WADE: It's an interesting format the way it came about. I think it's really interesting. I like it. I spent most of my time playing overseas, and my wife also, so we always played for a cup, a national cup, along with a championship, and you always did it in season. We're used to those values.

I think as time goes, as the tradition grows, you'll see more and more teams take pride in it, especially when you add the element of the charitable cause that you play for. It adds even more incentive.

I think it's a good Cup. I think it's about us donating our time and our energy and our efforts to represent the causes that we stand for, and I always think that's something that's going to mean something. The Cup element is big. It gives you championship experience when it comes to playing in money games.

I think it's good all the way around.

Q. You walked in here and you welcomed us all to Chicago and this city has had a lot of women's basketball in the last 12 months - the Finals, All-Star Game and now the Commissioner's Cup. Why is Chicago the perfect place to showcase this sport?

JAMES WADE: Just because the history of Chicago basketball, away from the Bulls. It's a lot of winners that have been raised here, and when you talk about toughness, that's what you think about.

It's a lot of metropolitan cities when it goes all the way around, but Chicago has a special place when it comes to basketball, and you can just count out the history away from the Bulls.

I think right now it's our time. I'm just happy to be a part of it. I feel the energy. I felt it at All-Star Game. I felt it last year in the Finals.

We had a game on the same day as Green Bay and the Bears, and our game still sold out, and that's just right up the road, and that just tells you what women's basketball means to the city. A lot of it goes with the culture that our leadership has created when it comes to bringing in a player like Candace Parker, bringing in a player like Emma Meesseman, and even untold stories like Rebekah Gardner. All these stories have wrapped into one beautiful story, I think, when you talk about the struggles to get to the top of Allie Quigley -- I lost my thought. When you talk about also Sloat, Sloat has been grinding for a long time and hasn't been that household name that your other point guards have been.

I just love these stories, and to actually say, okay, we're going to grind and continue to be blue collar, I think that blue-collar attitude that we've created here has kind of represented what the city stands for. Now I think a lot of people are taking notice, and the fact that we get to host all these things, it kind of puts Chicago at the forefront of all the conversations.

Q. Your team's ability to share the basketball, No. 1 in the league in assists, why is that?

JAMES WADE: I mean, certain teams have non-negotiables. That's one of ours. When we come here to this team, we have to be willing to play together. I mean, if you want to win. If you have individual things that you want to get to, that's fine, but the common goals of us playing for each other is the thing that has to be at the forefront of everything, and it's very important to me, and it's something that myself and our staff, we preach every day, because at the end of the day, everybody knows that feeling what it's like to lose. You never want to be a what-if person or a what-if team.

I'll take the pressure of if I ask you to really sacrifice and we lose, then that's on me and you do it. But if you don't sacrifice, then that's on everybody else. So we have to



sacrifice here, and you have to go find the best shot, have to screen for each other. When you fall down, you have to pick each other up. It's just a common theme.

I know it's not popular because now we're in an age of branding and stuff like that, but the biggest brands are the winning brands, and so that's what we try to follow.

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